



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Eric Koch

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2009 Legislative Report

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In your opinion, what important issues are facing our community today?

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Indiana Tightens Its Belt To Balance Budget

In response to lower revenues from a slower economy, the new biennial state budget cuts or flatlines all spending except education and public safety, while maintaining reserves of \$1 billion. Maintaining healthy reserves – a state savings account – protects taxpayers from future tax increases when state revenues fall due to poor economic conditions.

Defunding ACORN I have requested and received confirmation from the Indiana State Budget Agency that no Indiana state tax revenue is being received by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN). In light of the recent action by the U.S. Congress to defund ACORN, I wanted to make sure that no state tax dollars were being received - directly or indirectly - by ACORN or any affiliated organization. Responding to me on behalf of the State Budget Agency, Director Christopher A. Ruhl wrote: "Our search did not reveal any active contracts with ACORN, nor did it reveal any expenditures with ACORN during the current or previous fiscal year."

Hoosiers can take comfort in knowing that our hard-earned tax dollars are not going to this organization.

Restoring Classroom Discipline: House Enrolled Act 1462 will ease legal concerns among teachers and help instructors maintain order in the classroom by giving Indiana teachers qualified immunity in lawsuits that involve student discipline, requiring judges to dismiss cases in which teachers have acted in good faith and within the scope of their duties in enforcing discipline policies. The new law will also give teachers more authority to remove a disruptive student from the classroom.

Expanding Rural Broadband: House Enrolled Act 1561 requires the Indiana Economic Development Corporation to develop a High Speed Internet Service Deployment and Adoption Initiative that includes the creation of a statewide geographic information system (GIS) of available telecommunications and information technology services, including high speed Internet service.

The IEDC is required to utilize the GIS to map the availability of high speed Internet service by census blocks. Also, the map utilized by the IEDC may include the percentage of households that have access to broadband services and use the Federal Communications Commission benchmark rates for broadband service to identify different speed tiers.

The legislation provides that the IEDC should establish the following priorities in developing and implementing the High Speed Internet Service Deployment and Adoption Initiative:

- (1) extend the deployment of high speed Internet services to areas where Internet connections are unavailable, or the only available Internet connections provide capacity for transmission at an average speed of less than 200 kilobits per second (kbps) downstream;
- (2) extend the deployment of high speed Internet services to areas where the only available Internet connections provide capacity for transmission at an average speed between 200 kilobits and 1.5 megabits per second (mbps) downstream; and
- (3) support programs to promote broadband adoption throughout Indiana.



Rep. Koch joins Rep. Jeb Bardon (D-Indianapolis) and Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller to announce Indiana's new foreclosure prevention initiative.

New Rules for Young Drivers: Senate Enrolled Act 16 limits distractions for our newest, most inexperienced drivers by prohibiting drivers under 18 years of age from using a cell phone or texting, except for emergency calls, while driving. It also sets limits on when they may carry passengers.

Promoting Rural Interests: Hoosiers in rural areas will now have a stronger voice in state policy. I am a member of the newly-formed Indiana Rural Caucus, a bipartisan group of legislators within the Indiana General Assembly that has organized to advocate for rural interests.

Increasing Taxpayer Protection: House Enrolled Act 1001 (SS) brings more fairness to the property tax assessment system. If a taxpayer's assessment increases by more than 5 percent, the county assessor now has burden of justifying that increase. Previously, the taxpayer had the burden to prove that the assessment too high.

Constituent Services: If my office can be of assistance to you, please contact my legislative assistant, Stephen Moss, at 1-800-382-9841.

You can also e-mail me at h65@iga.in.gov or write to me at the Indiana Statehouse, 200 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.



Rep. Koch discusses the budget with Rep. Jeff Espich (R-Uniondale), the ranking Republican member of the House Ways and Means Committee.



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